(d) India has a share of about 55% by value in global trade of cut and polished diamonds and approximately 9 out of 10 diamonds in the world are processed in India. It has, therefore, been proposed that India should become a global trading centre in diamonds. The Exim Policyinitiatives such as provisions for the establishment of private/public bonded warehouses, the Diamond Dollar Account Scheme and permission for personal carriage of import and export parcels, etc. should facilitate development of Mumbai as a global trading centre for diamonds.

The Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), a representative autonomous body of the trade, sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has been interacting with some of the diamond mining countries to explore the possibilities of direct sourcing of rough diamonds. Indian Government has also signed a "Protocol of Intentions" with Government of Russia to cooperate in the area of diamonds including the direct supply of rough diamonds by Russia to *India.*

Cases against board level officers of STC/MMTC/PEC

2588. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central Vigilance Commissioner has given any advice regarding penalties to be imposed/action taken in respect of board level officers including CMD of STC, MMTC and PEC in the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the response of the Ministry in this regard;

(c) whether CVC has asked the Ministry to refer the above cases to CBI; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and whether the cases have since been referred; and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. CVC have advised to initiate major penalty proceedings in the following cases:-

1. Shri S.D. Kapoor, CMD,MMTC
2. Shri P.N. Sharma, Director, MMTC.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. In the case of Shri P.N. Sharma, Director MMTC, Government has since taken a decision to refer the case to CBI, as advised by CVC. The advise of CVC in the case against Shri S.D. Kapoor, CMD, MMTC is under consideration.

Assistance to salt industry

2589. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether to production of salt has suffered a severe set back in the recent devastating earthquake in Gujarat;

(b) the loss of production of salt in terms of quantity; and

(c) what steps have been taken to help the salt industry and salt producers to overcome the impact of the earthquake?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, the production loss of common salt and refined iodized salt due to the earthquake is estimated about 10 lakh tonnes and 4 lakh tonnes, respectively.

(c) The Government of India is operating a scheme through the Office of Salt Commissioner for grant of financial assistance to salt works damaged on account of natural calamities' which provides for payment of ex-gratia assistance and rehabilitation loans to the affected salt works in respect of damages caused to the earth work, *viz.* reservoirs, condensers, crystallizer, bunds etc. The Committees have been constituted to assess the actual damages caused to the salt works for grant of necessary ex-gratia assistance/rehabilitation loans, as per the provisions of the said scheme.

The Government of Gujarat vide their Resolution dated 2.3.2001 have announced to extend the following assistance/relief where the State Government has declared affected area and wherein salt works have been damaged due to the earthquake.

(i) Small Agarias holding 10 acres plot would be paid at the rate of Rs. 2000/- and if the cost of damages is more than Rs. 2000/- they would be paid at the rate of Rs. 5000/- considering the 100% damages.

(ii) In the affected area, as declared by the State Government, the lessee will